
Increasing Agricultural Community Involvement in Regional Conservation Planning

Lessons from Landowners, Non-profit Organizations, Local Governments and Agency Staff

By Bryan Henson
Graduate Fellow
Sustainable Communities Leadership Program

Prepared for
The California Department of Fish and Game

January 2004

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	4
Introduction	5
Overview of Regional Conservation Planning	5
Agricultural Landowners	6
Methods	7
Sample Design	7
Study Area	7
Interviews of Organizations	7
Landowner Interviews	8
Presentations to Organizations	9
Organizational Interview Results	10
Mistrust of Agencies	10
Property Rights Issues	10
Miscommunication and Misunderstanding	11
Growing Regulatory Pressure	12
Lack of Incentives to Participate	12
Land Values	13
Landowner Interview Results	14
Background Information	14
Perspectives on Conservation Planning	15
Perspectives on Private Property Rights	16
Perspectives on Solutions	17
Discussion and Recommendations	19
Barriers to Agricultural Community Participation in Conservation Planning	19
Strategies for Overcoming Barriers	21
Further Study	28
Conclusion	29
Appendixes and Tables	30

Index of Appendixes

Appendix 1 Landowner Mail Survey Sample	30
Appendix 2 Landowner Interview Results	38
Appendix 3 Land Use Planning Concerns Responses	44
Appendix 4 Expressed Barriers to Regional Conservation Planning Participation.....	45
Appendix 5 Methods, Techniques or Ideas that would Encourage Agricultural Landowner Participation in Conservation Plans	46
Appendix 6 General Landowner Comments	47

Index of Tables

Table 1 Represented Farming Activities	38
Table 2 Represented Associations and Organizations by Category	38
Table 3 Land Use Planning Issues Facing Agriculture	38
Table 4 Landowner Involvement in Local Resource Programs.....	38
Table 5 Importance of Wildlife, Habitat and Species Protection	39
Table 6 Limiting Species Protection to Public Land	39
Table 7 Parties Responsible for Protecting Wildlife	39
Table 8 Expressed Barriers to Regional Conservation Planning Participation.....	40
Table 9 Landowner Perspectives on Conservation Planning.....	40
Table 10 Landowner Perspectives on Private Property Rights.....	41
Table 11 Perception of the Effect of Conservation Plans on Property Values	41
Table 12 Landowner Perspectives on Potential Incentives to Increase Participation.....	42
Table 13 Landowner Preferences of Receiving Information about Conservation Planning	42
Table 14 Ideas that would Encourage Landowner Participation in Conservation Plans ..	43
Table 15 Landowner Access to the Internet and Email	43
Table 16 Landowner Awareness of Regional Conservation Plans in their Area.....	43
Table 17 Organizations That Could Best Represent Landowners' Interests in a Regional Conservation Plan.....	43

Executive Summary

Agricultural landowner involvement in regional open space and habitat conservation plans, such as California's Natural Community Conservation Plans (NCCPs) or federal Habitat Conservation Plans (HCPs), has been minimal or resistant. For conservation plans on a landscape scale to be accomplished in counties with a strong agricultural presence, it is necessary to understand the agricultural community's concerns and apprehensions regarding such plans.

The opinions and perspectives of the agricultural community regarding habitat and species conservation are as diverse as the products they grow. This diversity has made it difficult so far to offer incentives that would bring the entire agricultural community to the table and keep them participating for the long term. While diverse in opinions and perspectives, the agricultural community seems to have a common set of concerns regarding regional conservation planning.

A total of 49 in depth interviews were conducted with agricultural organizations, agency staff and individual landowners in Yolo, Solano, and Placer Counties in California. These interviews provided insights regarding barriers to the agricultural community's engagement in regional conservation plans. The major barriers to participation identified in this study are mistrust of government, miscommunication, restrictions on land use, impact on land values and lack of incentives to participate.

Though the identification of barriers to participation is important, the primary focus of this study was to identify potential solutions to those barriers. Organizations and landowners gave their perspectives on what could be done to overcome the barriers. Their ideas include improving outreach to the agricultural community through partnership building and education, emphasizing commonalities among agencies, plan participants and the agricultural community, creating incentives to participate, and celebrating successes.

The findings presented here are intended to highlight areas for improvement, rather than emphasize past mistakes. The California Department of Fish and Game's willingness to sponsor this study is an indication of its commitment to collaborations aimed at successful habitat and species conservation. The information provided is intended to be used by conservation planners, agency staff, plan representatives and participants, and the agricultural community to initiate and foster relationships that focus on shared goals and cooperation. In the future, conservation planners will likely find their strongest allies in the agricultural community.

Introduction

Ninety-five percent of all federally-listed threatened and endangered species in the United States occupy habitat on private land. A third to a half of these species depend solely on non-federal land for their survival¹. California is home to 300 federally listed endangered and threatened species, and 227 state listed endangered and threatened species². In California, approximately 48% of the land is held in private ownership, and more than 57% of that land is devoted to agriculture³. California is home to 88,000 farms totaling 27.7 million acres of land, which produce over 350 different crops and generate over 27.6 billion dollars per year⁴. These statistics highlight the fact that successful protection of biodiversity in California will require a new level of cooperation and collaboration between wildlife agencies and the agricultural community.

Agricultural landowner involvement in regional open space and habitat conservation plans, such as California's Natural Community Conservation Plans (NCCPs) or federal Habitat Conservation Plans (HCPs), has been minimal or resistant. For conservation plans on a landscape scale to be accomplished in counties with a strong agricultural presence, all participants need to understand the agricultural community's concerns and apprehensions regarding such plans. By so doing, local, state, and federal agency staff and plan representatives can apply appropriate methods and incentives to better involve the agricultural community in conservation planning partnerships.

Overview of Regional Conservation Planning

The California NCCP Act was passed in 1991. At this time the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) began working with cities, counties, landowners and other interested stakeholders to develop comprehensive habitat conservation plans to protect biological diversity and conserve sensitive species, while allowing for appropriate and compatible economic development. Amendments to the NCCP Act in 2002 placed added emphasis on public outreach to a balanced variety of affected interest groups including “county agricultural commissioners, agricultural organizations, [and] landowners....”

NCCPs that have been completed as of 2003 have been developed in predominantly urbanized, southern California counties. As a result, the agricultural community has taken a relatively minor, backseat role in the plans to date. The NCCP process has been

¹ Wilcove, D., Bean, M., Bonnie, R. and McMillan, M. 1996. Rebuilding the ark: toward a more effective Endangered Species Act for private land. Environmental Defense Fund, Washington, D.C.

² Defenders of Wildlife. California Endangered Species. Available from <http://www.defenders.org/california/esa.html> (accessed September 2003).

³ National Wilderness Institute and U.S. Bureau of the Census. 1995. State by state government land ownership: statistical abstract of the United States. NWI, Washington, D.C. Available from <http://www.nwi.org/Maps/LandChart.html> (accessed September 2003).

⁴ U.S. Department of Agriculture. National Agricultural Statistics Service. Available from <http://www.nass.usda.gov/ca/bul/agstat/indexcas.htm> (accessed September 2003).

gaining momentum among local jurisdictions and landowners, and in the past five years has been initiated in several central and northern California counties where there is a strong agricultural presence.

Plans developed pursuant to the NCCP Act are typically designed to concurrently satisfy the requirements for a Habitat Conservation Plan under the federal Endangered Species Act. Such plans are designed to address conservation of both state and federally-listed species as well as non-listed species. The State of California can also authorize take of state-listed species under the California Endangered Species Act. For the purposes of this report, all large habitat conservation plans that address conservation of multiple species at the landscape scale shall be referred to as “regional conservation plans,” regardless of which Act they were developed pursuant to.

A number of regional conservation plans in California have been either stalled or canceled due to agricultural organizations’ and landowners’ opposition. The reasons for this opposition have until this point been unclear, thus providing the motivation for this study.

Agricultural Landowners

The opinions and perspectives of agricultural landowners regarding habitat and species conservation are as diverse as the products they grow. Agricultural landowners (referred to herein as "landowners") are impacted by the regulatory environment in various ways depending upon what they grow and how they operate. Where some landowners depend solely on their agricultural operation for their income, others supplement their incomes through other means, thus influencing how they respond to regulation. Landowners' opinions also vary due to individual experiences and personal convictions. This diversity has made it difficult so far to offer incentives that would bring the agricultural community to the table and keep them participating for the long term.

While diverse in opinions and perspectives, the agricultural community seems to have common concerns regarding regional conservation planning. This paper distills those common themes and outlines the major barriers to agricultural community involvement in conservation planning, identifies ways to overcome those barriers, and provides proactive approaches to soliciting agricultural landowner participation. The findings presented here are offered for use by conservation planners, agency staff, plan representatives and plan participants when approaching and working with the agricultural community, and are intended to be a starting point for engaging agricultural landowners and agricultural groups.

This project was developed and conducted by Bryan Henson, who in 2003 was a graduate fellow in the Sustainable Communities Leadership Program, a non-profit program of the Environmental Careers Organization. All information presented in this report is based upon interviews with agricultural landowners, farmers, and representatives from non-profit organizations, county governments and agencies that work directly with agricultural landowners.

Methods

Sample Design

This project was initiated in late June of 2003 and was completed in early September of the same year. In order to collect as much information from as many individuals as possible during this time frame, all methods of communication, including in-person, phone, email, mail and presentations were used to solicit information.

Two primary groups provided sources of information. The first group comprised individuals representing various organizations that work directly with the agricultural community. Several individuals in this category also provided input for a formal questionnaire that was administered to agricultural landowners. The second group consisted of agricultural landowners, which represented a variety of different farming operations and activities. The samples for this study were not intended to represent the entire agricultural population of the focus counties, but rather are intended to represent a cross section of people with involvement in agricultural issues.

Study Area

The focus of this study was on Placer, Yolo and Solano Counties in California's central valley, all of which are currently working on regional conservation plans. The landscape in these counties is dominated by agricultural uses. The conservation plans are at various stages, but all are actively seeking input from interested stakeholders and landowners, thus making them ideal locations for soliciting information regarding agricultural landowners' attitudes and perspectives toward regional conservation planning. Types of agriculture occurring in these counties include rice farming, livestock ranching, row crops, berries, orchards and vineyards.

Interviews of Organizations

Individuals who work with the agricultural community on an organizational level have a valuable perspective in that they are generally aware of the concerns of landowners and the regulations and pressures they face. This group is educated about land use planning issues and is often aware of the perspectives of regulatory agencies. Organizations also have a regional or statewide perspective, and may be involved in the development of legislation or regulations affecting agricultural operations. Twenty-three in depth interviews were conducted, including interviews with Resource Conservation Districts (3), federal agency staff (2), state agency staff (4), local agency staff (1), non-profit directors (9), a county planner (1), university extension staff (1), university researcher (1) and agricultural commission director (1). The length of the interviews ranged from half of an hour to over 2 hours. The average length was approximately one hour long. The majority of the interviews were in person, though several took place over the phone or by email. Two primary questions were asked during the interviews to initiate discussion: 1) "What are the barriers to agricultural landowner involvement in regional habitat conservation planning?" and 2) "What can be done to overcome those barriers?"

The informal nature of the interviews and the open ended questions allowed for a variety of responses. These interviews were also integral in identifying landowners who would be willing to give their time and perspectives and in increasing the response rate of landowners. Many of the individuals in the organizational group either contacted landowners directly or vouched for the project when questioned by landowners.

Landowner Interviews

Landowner interviews were much more structured than the organizational interviews. A questionnaire was developed that could be mailed, emailed or given in person to landowners. Sixty-six landowners were presented with questionnaires that were either mailed to them or presented to them at meetings, and 11 landowners were contacted for personal interviews. Seventeen responses were returned through the mail and 9 personal interviews were conducted, totaling 26 landowner responses, and a response rate of 34 percent.

In order to facilitate the different survey methods, two versions of the questionnaire were developed, one version for personal interviews and one for mailing. Though slightly different in structure, the wording of all of the questions was identical in the two versions in order to minimize the bias that can occur between two different sampling methods. The main difference between the two versions was that the mail survey included an introductory letter, and brief instructions on how to fill out the survey. A sample of the mail survey can be seen in Appendix 1.

This study was conducted during July, August and September, which is arguably one of the busiest times of the year for farmers. Given the short time frame of the study, and the time constraints on landowners, the strategy of using members of the organizational group as intermediaries was helpful in identifying those individuals who were informed and knowledgeable about the topic, and in increasing response rates⁵. The majority of landowners who were identified and contacted were directly suggested by non-profit, governmental, educational or organizational staff.

Personal interviews, ranging from half an hour to two hours depending upon the perspectives and personalities of the individuals, were conducted with nine landowners. In every case the farmers were willing to discuss the project as long as the interviews could be conducted according to their schedule and at a convenient location to them. Most of the interviews were conducted on their farm, either at the kitchen table or out in the field while harvesting or processing their crops.

Questionnaires were mailed to 31 landowners. The purpose of the mail questionnaire was to make the questionnaire available to those landowners who could not be contacted via phone due to time conflicts or vacations.

⁵ Hilty, J., and Merenlender, A. 2003. Studying Biodiversity on Private Lands. *Conservation Biology* 17: 132-137.

Presentations to Organizations

Three presentations were made to Farm Bureau meetings in Placer and Yolo Counties and one Resource Conservation District board meeting in Solano County. In total, 35 landowners and farmers were present. At these meetings the purpose of the project was presented, and questionnaires were distributed with stamped return envelopes. Each presentation was the product of a conversation and subsequent invitation from one of the members of the organization, resulting in a brief introduction of the purposes of the study and endorsement of the study idea by the organization member.

Organizational Interview Results

The general concerns of the agricultural community about regional conservation planning, as presented by representatives from organizations that work with the agricultural community, can be grouped into six broad categories: mistrust of State and Federal agencies, property rights issues, miscommunication, growing regulatory pressure, lack of incentives, and concerns about changing land values. Though complex and interrelated, these categories best capture the barriers to landowner and agricultural organization participation.

Mistrust of Agencies

Perhaps the most reiterated statement that organizational interviewees made was that the apprehension of landowners to participate in government programs is born out of a history of mistrust of agencies. The perceived lack of consistency, compromise and follow through by state and federal agencies has left many landowners with a negative picture of regulatory agencies and staff. Landowners have long memories because of their connection to their property, yet state and federal agency employees often change at a rapid rate. Such turnover in staff can preclude establishing trusting relationships with landowners. When landowners feel that they have been the recipient of changing values and rules, or have been left paying for "a promise that an agency has backed out of" they are reluctant to involve themselves in any future relationships with agencies. Stories of negative agency interactions are passed down to younger generations and told to friends and neighbors, breeding an "Us versus Them" dichotomy. It is this dichotomy that has made working with landowners such a challenging endeavor in the past, and will continue to prove a challenge into the future.

Contributing to the polarization of landowners and agency staff is the landowner's perception that any participation in a plan with a regulatory agency opens up their land to assessment and possible regulation in the future. Their perception is that any information disclosure can lead to a loss of private property rights. Landowners fear that the data gathering stages of HCPs and NCCPs could lead to future regulation as a result of data consolidation and map generation. All of these factors contribute to a disincentive to participate.

Another element of distrust centers on agency use of scientific evidence and decisions based on incomplete data. The general perception is that agencies make unnecessarily conservative decisions when sufficient scientific information is lacking. Landowners perceive that they are continually paying the price for regulation that is based on the personality or opinions of individual biologists and agency staff, rather than consistent messages and applications of science and policy. Agriculturalists also believe the agencies show favoritism to the concerns and preferences of the environmental community over the agricultural community.

Property Rights Issues

A major concern of landowners is the freedom to carry out their daily farm or ranch practices without interference. The general perception is that any involvement in an

NCCP/HCP will involve them with government agencies, which will lead to restrictions. Landowners will resist anything that appears to limit their rights or current status quo of their operation.

The removal of agricultural land from active production is a concern for many agricultural interests. Those that make this claim believe that taking any land out of production for habitat restoration could reduce the local tax base, reduce employment and increase crop predation on nearby lands, thus adversely affecting the local community. Because of these perceptions, taking agricultural land out of production for habitat restoration has been met with resistance in the past and will likely be a contentious issue in the future. Dovetailing with this is the strong dislike of in-perpetuity conservation easements. Landowners are reluctant to sign up for an easement that limits their ability to determine the course of their land holdings into the future. Although farmers and ranchers are committed to maintaining their freedoms and property rights in order to continue with their current activities, many want to maintain all future options for profitability, including selling their land to development interests.

Miscommunication and Misunderstanding

Miscommunication and misunderstanding are both inherent in large-scale projects with multiple stakeholders, and are a primary source of contention and resistance to the projects. One organizational representative commented that when individuals do not clearly understand the purposes and process of a plan that includes their property, they tend to think of the worst case scenario. For example, landowners at a Farm Bureau meeting expressed frustration about why the NCCP in the area is covering unlisted species. They apparently could not understand the reasoning behind the NCCP covering other than listed species and they perceived that they were bearing the brunt of unnecessary regulation. Either the purposes of the NCCP were not communicated clearly, or they were not communicated at all. The following topics were identified as areas of miscommunication and misunderstanding:

- Lack of understanding of the motives and details of conservation planning.
- Fear that participation in a plan will bring more endangered species regulation.
- Fear that Safe Harbor⁶ will not apply to their situation.
- Worry that there will be pressure to sell their land or participate in an easement, even though in writing all such participation is voluntary.
- Lack of understanding of the relationship between conservation planning and laws like the Endangered Species Acts.
- Lack of understanding why an NCCP would cover species that are not listed.
- Lack of understanding the value of habitat for wildlife survival.
- Confusion on how farming practices will be affected.

⁶ Safe Harbor is a program under the Federal Endangered Species Act whereby landowners can voluntarily enhance habitat for listed species on their property, and retain the right to remove the enhanced habitat without fear of prosecution or the need to mitigate for the impacts.

This short list does not capture all of the issues that may be confusing to landowners, nor does it apply to every individual. However, this list does reflect responses from landowners in counties where NCCP/HCPs are in progress, which suggests that there is still a lack of understanding about how the plans operate and what they mean to the individual landowner.

Growing Regulatory Pressure

Several organizations mentioned that agriculture has seen an increase in regulation during the past few years, most recently exemplified by the new agricultural runoff waiver regulations⁷. Landowners have a limited amount of time and effort that they can devote to non-revenue generating activities, so when they are forced to be involved with regulators through water, air, pesticide or fertilizer regulation, their willingness to participate with agencies in voluntary habitat or cost share programs is limited.

Landowners are also concerned that participation in conservation planning will lead to more regulation in the future, whether direct or indirect. One example is the fear that a farmer's ability to spray pesticides would be compromised if the farm is located near conservation lands. Many farmers feel that they are already over regulated, making them apprehensive towards any additional requirements.

Lack of Incentives to Participate

It is difficult for those who do not come from an agricultural background to understand the pressures that landowners face. Many farmers and ranchers indicated that their chosen livelihood is financially unstable. They work long, hard hours, and those who might be interested in and willing to participate in conservation planning may not have the time to go to meetings. Many landowners do not want to be linked in any way to endangered species regulation, even with a Safe Harbor provision. Given this, communicating the benefits for landowners to participate in conservation plans is very necessary, yet missing, and as a result the landowners remain uninterested. The current incentives are not enough to overcome these barriers. In addition, some landowners and agricultural interests that were involved in advisory committees felt powerless, and were not sure how their voice really counted.

Landowners are skeptical of the value of regulatory relief. Other than the prohibition for take of listed species under Endangered Species Acts, there are little or no restrictions on agricultural practices such as conversion of rangeland to intensive cultivation. The perception is that participating in a conservation plan would create new restrictions, providing little incentive to participate. A further disincentive is that involvement in an agreement to protect habitat values in perpetuity would limit landowners' options in the future.

⁷ For more information on the Agricultural Waiver, see the California Regional Water Quality Control Board website. Irrigated Lands News. Issue 1. October 2003.
http://www.swrcb.ca.gov/rwqcb5/programs/irrigated_lands/newslet_101003.pdf

Land Values

The effect of a conservation plan on property values is a concern among many landowners. Concerns about decreases and increases in property values were both expressed during the interviews. One interviewee commented that participation in a regional conservation plan would "create a lien on the land and lower its value. This is negative when land is appraised and when it is used as collateral on a loan." Many landowners rely on loans for their operating capital, and although this perception may not be accurate, it acts as a barrier to their participation. On the other hand, some farmers feel that property value increases will limit their ability to buy more land to expand their operations. Whether or not the land values increase, decrease or remain stable as a result of a conservation plan, these perceptions contribute to landowner apprehension.

Landowner Interview Results

The landowner questionnaire contained a total of 53 questions separated into four sections, including: 1) 18 questions on background information, 2) 14 questions on perspectives on conservation planning, 3) 7 questions on perspectives on private property rights, and 4) 14 questions on perspectives on solutions. The results of these questions can be seen in table format in Appendix 2. The following section highlights the main results of the questionnaire.

Background Information

The landowners who completed the questionnaire represent a variety of farming activities. Roughly half of the landowners rely on their farming activities for their primary source of income. Each landowner was a member of an average of two agriculturally related organizations, with twenty different organizations represented by the landowners collectively. Growers associations and the local Farm Bureau had the highest participation. The high rate of Farm Bureau membership could be a result of distributing questionnaires at two Farm Bureau meetings.

Land Use Planning Concerns

When asked what the major land use planning issues are that the agricultural community is facing in their area, 24 of the 26 landowners gave a wide variety of responses to this question. The responses were grouped into seven categories, with human population growth and urban development the number one concern (83%), followed by water rights issues (29%), endangered species regulation (17%) and regulation in general (17%). The entire, unclassified responses can be seen in Appendix 3.

Resource/Advisory Organization Participation

Sixty-five percent of landowners had participated with, or received input from the local Agricultural Extension, 50% had participated with the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), 42% with the local Resource Conservation District (RCD) and 8% (2 respondents) had worked with a non-profit land trust. Of those that had worked with these organizations, 17 landowners received help with soil and water conservation, 9 participated in wildlife programs and 2 granted conservation easements on a portion of their land. Those who participated in wildlife programs created habitat by seeding native vegetation on areas of their farm, building ponds, and planting hedgerows.

Environmental Perspectives

A series of questions were aimed at better understanding landowners' values and perspectives on natural landscapes, wildlife habitat and species conservation. The majority of landowners (72%) responded that protection of California's natural landscapes and wildlife is very important. The landowners also believe that having wildlife habitat near their community is very important to their quality of life (68%). For both of these questions only one respondent answered "not important". When asked how important it was to have a balance between species protection and human activities, 91% of landowners responded that it was either somewhat or very important.

Landowners interpreted "balance" in the following two different ways. For some it was clear from their comments that the balance was swayed towards species and habitat protection and against human activities. Others commented that the balance is swayed toward certain human activities. For example, one landowner pointed to a subdivision of thousands of new houses and commented that, "There is no balance. Humans win every time." For this landowner the balance seemed skewed away from species protection and towards development. These results show that agricultural landowners are not necessarily against habitat and wildlife protection. On the contrary, many landowners care about protecting species and they highly value natural landscapes.

Twenty-three landowners responded to the question of whether or not protection of endangered species should be limited to public land. Fifty-seven percent believed that protection should not be limited to public lands, 39% believed that it should and 4% did not know. Several landowners commented that species protection on private land would be appropriate if the landowners were paid.

Landowners were given a choice of categories for who should be responsible for the costs of protecting wildlife in California. Respondents were given the choice of selecting multiple categories. The category with the highest selection rate was "All California Residents," indicating that landowners feel the cost should be shared by everyone in the state. Landowners commented that if their land supported important wildlife habitat, and their profits were adversely impacted through habitat regulation, then those costs should be passed on to everyone. Slightly less than half of the landowners selected developers and state agencies as responsible parties for wildlife and habitat protection, both of which received higher percentages than federal agencies, environmental groups and local governments.

Perspectives on Conservation Planning

More than half of the landowners had heard of HCPs (62%) or NCCPs (54%), and slightly less had heard about Safe Harbor provisions (42%). In general, landowners indicated that they did not understand the conservation planning process, with only one respondent indicating that he understood the process very well. Over half of the respondents who knew about HCPs or NCCPs had heard about them from the Farm Bureau. As mentioned before, this could be an artifact of distributing the questionnaires at two Farm Bureau meetings. No information about conservation planning was provided to landowners during this study.

Landowners were asked what the main reasons are that would keep them from participating in a regional conservation plan. The answers were classified into six different categories. The entire responses given by landowners can be seen in Appendix 4.

Government mistrust was the most common response. This category included such comments as the threat of additional regulation, concern that the agencies would gain control of the deed of trust to their land, and general mistrust of agency officials. The

second largest reason for not participating was financial. The perception is that involvement in a conservation plan is expensive for landowners. Half of the landowners who gave this response explicitly indicated that the costs are directly incurred by landowners. Whether or not landowners meant that it would cost them outright or through foregone revenues as a result of possible restrictions is unclear from the responses. The other half did not indicate whether they deemed it too costly for them, the local government, or the plan itself.

Restricted land use was the third largest category. Landowners reiterated the responses from the organizational interviews that any involvement in a conservation plan will limit their ability to determine the course of their operations. To one landowner the issue is "...what you can and can't do with your land...your future livelihood." A number of landowners also indicated that the process is too time consuming for landowners to participate.

Landowners were asked a series of questions regarding conservation plans and conservation planning that they could either agree or disagree with. In general, these results show that landowners believe that farming and habitat protection are not mutually exclusive activities, and that regional conservation plans are an effective means of both protecting farmland and habitat from urban encroachment. However, 81% of respondents agreed that there were very few incentives for them to participate in regional conservation plans.

Perspectives on Private Property Rights

Landowners were asked a series of questions regarding property rights issues. Roughly one third of respondents believed that they would not be able to carry on their current farming practices indefinitely. Approximately three-quarters of respondents believe that they will have to change some aspect of their operation for financial reasons. Over 80% of respondents want the freedom to be able to change their farming practices anytime for any reason they deem necessary. Every respondent agreed that conservation plans should offer options to landowners that protect their investment and future economic gains. Eighty-eight percent of respondents agreed that voluntary involvement in a conservation plan should protect landowners from any additional regulation for protection of species and habitats covered in the plan (this is actually consistent with current HCP and NCCP programs).

Landowners had mixed perspectives on the effect of a conservation plan on property values. Though slightly more than half of the respondents believe that property values will decrease, the rest were split between those who did not know and those who believed that property values would increase. As mentioned in the Land Values section of the organizational interviews, anything that could decrease property values creates a disincentive to participate because a landowner's borrowing power is linked to the assessed value of the land.

Perspectives on Solutions

Most landowners believed that better involving the local RCD or NRCS would help to increase landowner participation, and 96% agreed that an agricultural presence on the technical advisory groups would be advantageous. Seventy-two percent of respondents agreed that they would be interested in a Safe Harbor provision. Slightly more than half of the respondents felt that a wildlife friendly certification would be beneficial to their operation. Confidentiality of biological information is important to landowners, with 80% of respondents agreeing that some sort of assurances regarding the information should be provided.

Two questions about communication were asked in the series about potential solutions. Eighty-three percent of landowners indicated they would like to give their perspectives to people involved in developing conservation plans, but they do not have the time to go to regular meetings. However, it remains unclear whether those who disagree with this statement either do not have the time or are not interested in giving their perspectives. The second question asked if respondents agreed that the agencies should make a proactive concerted effort to listen to and address the needs of agricultural landowners. Ninety-two percent of respondents agreed to this statement.

Landowners were asked to indicate what methods of communication are most effective for disseminating information regarding conservation planning efforts in their area. Periodic newsletter mailings were most preferred (65%). Second highest was the preference for meetings held in the evening rather than during the day (54%). Personal contact from agency staff would be effective for 38% of those participating in this study. Only 27% said that a personal contact from a representative group (such as those seen in Table 2) would be effective. Websites, weekend meetings and emails were last on the list.

Landowners were asked if there were any methods, techniques or ideas not previously covered in the questionnaire that would encourage their participation in conservation plans. Fourteen landowners responded to this question and provided a variety of answers. The entire list of responses can be seen in Appendix 5. Monetary compensation was the most frequent response (43%), and included such comments as tax breaks and subsidies for providing habitat.

Education about conservation was the second most frequent comment (36%) and included education on legal issues surrounding easements and the intersection of private property rights and conservation plans. One landowner commented, "Educate the farmers. [Tell us] what is important, why it is important, why it got that way and what they [the agencies] want to do about it." Another landowner commented, "Change the public image of the agency being controlling, which is the biggest turnoff to cooperation. The agency should come in as a support or help. Farmers like to be left alone. It will take a while for new generations to build trust. They [conservation planners] have to communicate why farmers need Fish and Game's help."

Farmers were asked if they had access to the internet or email and if they were aware of any regional conservation plans occurring in their county. Approximately two-thirds of landowners have access to the internet and email, and just over half are aware of a regional conservation plan currently happening in their county.

Twenty-one landowners gave 25 responses to an open-ended question as to what organization could best represent their interests in a regional conservation plan. The local Farm Bureau received the most responses, followed closely by the local RCD, local county government, growers associations and Agricultural Commission. These categories seem to reflect the organizations in which landowners are members (see Table 2). The county government category included the board of supervisors and local county initiatives such as Placer Legacy in Placer County.

Lastly, landowners were given the opportunity to make any general comments about conservation plans or conservation planning. Comments written in the margins in other sections of the questionnaire were also added to this section. Although a wide variety of comments were given, several stand out and are worth mentioning here. One landowner commented on the lack of understanding between the agricultural community and the Department of Fish and Game with "Right now people are operating with a lot of ignorance. The purpose of farming is to make money. Fish and Game needs to understand this. Farms are better than houses, so make it better for farmers." On this same issue, another landowner said, "We have seen thorough information gathered at the county farm bureau how farmers have lost out entirely once habitat conservation plans were implemented!" Another mentioned that they are willing to protect species, but they do not want their land locked up so they can't sell it if they needed to. One landowner expressed frustration and lack of hope regarding habitat protection by commenting that, "The process of wildlife/habitat destruction has gone on for so long it is probably gone too far. We used to see deer and elk around in the '50's, but not anymore." The entire list can be seen in Appendix 6.

Discussion and Recommendations

The results of the organizational and landowner interviews provide a base of information from which the barriers to agricultural community participation can be evaluated, and bridges to overcome those barriers can be created. The interviews will be distilled and the barriers will be discussed in order to gain a clear understanding of the issue and its causes. General and specific recommendations on how to approach and overcome the barriers will then be discussed in order to provide agency staff and other plan participants with a broad set of tools for engaging the agricultural community at any stage in the regional conservation planning process.

Barriers to Agricultural Community Participation in Conservation Planning

The overwhelming majority of landowners who participated in this study indicated that protection of natural landscapes and wildlife is important, and that wildlife habitat near their community is important for their quality of life. Therefore it should not be assumed that the agricultural community is against protecting wildlife and habitat. One landowner commented that many of the younger farmers in the area were “pro” environment, but were frustrated because they feel that they are continually painted as poor land stewards by the environmental community. Why, then, is the agricultural community so resistant to conservation plans if natural landscapes and wildlife are so important to them? The following barriers are the major disincentives to agricultural participation.

Government Mistrust

Organization representatives and landowners both indicated that mistrust of government agencies and staff is a major barrier to regional conservation planning collaboration. Wondolleck and Yaffee, in *Making Collaboration Work*, observed that, "Mistrust is a common barrier to any cooperative process and often results in a lack of support for collaboration"⁸. Mistrust can result in skepticism about the motives behind the plans, which further propels opposition toward the plan and the agencies promoting the plan. This lack of trust is often focused on the government in general (local, state, and federal) and not necessarily any one specific agency or department. The following are the primary reasons for the mistrust:

- **Few established relationships between agency staff and the agricultural community.** According to the agricultural community, agency staffs have not made sufficient time to meet and build relationships with local landowners. Compounding this issue is the high rate of agency staff turnover on the local level, resulting in few lasting relationships.
- **Perception of regulatory agencies as an arm or extension of the environmental community.** Some in the agricultural community believe that the government and

⁸ Wondolleck, J. and Yaffee, S. *Making Collaboration Work. Lessons From Innovation in Natural Resource Management*. Island Press, Washington, D.C. 2000.

environmental community are working together against the agricultural community. One landowner's perception was that the "ultimate goal of a conservation plan is to eventually make farming unprofitable so the land is sold in its entirety to and for public habitat use." Another perception within the agricultural community, according to interviews with organizations and landowners, is that the wildlife agencies consistently err on the side of the environmental community by making decisions based on inconclusive or incomplete data. The agencies are responsible for protecting the public trust (in this case, wildlife and habitat), and decisions must often be made in the absence of complete information due to timing and expense of further data collection. When decisions regarding wildlife and habitat are perceived to directly affect landowners' abilities to make a living, and if the agricultural community feels that the decisions have been made hastily or that the evidence does not support the decisions, then they are likely to feel as if the decision was made unfairly.

- **Historical perceived or actual wrongdoing** either from first hand experiences, local experiences (friend or family) or reported experiences either from the press, Farm Bureau or other agricultural organizations. The agricultural community is characterized by its communal nature. Stories of perceived agency wrongdoing are told and retold through publication and word of mouth. In this survey it was mentioned several times that there were "horror stories" resulting from involvement with wildlife agencies.

Miscommunication and Misinformation

Miscommunication and a lack of understanding about conservation planning were highlighted by the organizations interviewed as major barriers to participation. At one local Farm Bureau meeting questions arose about a specific aspect of an NCCP in progress in the area. When questioned when the last time a Fish and Wildlife Service or Department of Fish and Game representative had been to the Farm Bureau meeting to talk about the plan, one director said in his 15 years of participating in Farm Bureau meetings, never once had an agency representative spoken at one of their meetings. Had a relationship been established and in place, these Farm Bureau directors could have called on agency staff to talk to them about the issue at their next meeting.

When asked whether or not they were aware of any regional conservation plans occurring in their area, just over half of the landowners responded that they were aware.

Considering that all of the counties in the study area are at some point in the process of developing a long-term, landscape-scale HCP or NCCP, it is somewhat surprising that nearly half of the landowners were not aware of the plan occurring in their area. Though this study cannot be used as a representative sample for the entire agricultural community in the focus counties, it does highlight a potential roadblock to the success of any plan.

One should expect that a greater number of landowners would have heard about the conservation plans, especially plans that have already been in progress for several years.

Apparent from this study is the general lack of understanding of the motives, process and details of a conservation plan. The landowners indicated that they did not understand the

process of developing the plans, and it was apparent from the organization interviews that much of the details about how the plan would affect local operations were unknown. It seemed as if the interviewees had not made the connection that what the plan means on the ground for the individual landowner is determined through the plan development process and is not mandated from some external source.

Problems have also arisen related to public meetings. Comments were made about landowners feeling isolated or confused at stakeholder and public meetings by the use of unfamiliar technical, planning or legal terminology. In addition, any meeting held during the day will result in a very low attendance rate from the agricultural community. Most landowners work during daylight hours and, unlike agency staff, are not paid to go to meetings about conservation planning. For a landowner to go to a meeting during the day means that the landowner may be losing money through the cost of his or her time.

Restrictions on Land Use

A major disincentive for the agricultural community is the perception that involvement with agencies will result in interference in farm activities either through additional regulations, direct monetary costs, or indirect costs such as restrictions on what crops can be grown.

Impact on Land Values

The agricultural community repeatedly expressed concerns over the impacts of a conservation plan on land values. Many landowners and organizations indicated that they were concerned about decreases in land values more than they were concerned about possible increases.

Missing Incentives/Unclear Benefits

The overwhelming perception regarding incentives to participation is that there aren't any tangible benefits to be derived from the plans. The agricultural community sees the plans as a large set of requirements. Understandably, if all that is perceived are 'sticks without any carrots', then the agricultural community will not only avoid participating, but will take measures to resist the plans. Landowners also perceived that participation will require time [and therefore money] from them. Many landowners communicated that time and money are too scarce for them to willingly relinquish these resources without direct benefits.

Strategies for Overcoming Barriers

Although the barriers to agricultural community engagement in conservation planning pose a formidable challenge to conservation planners hoping to solicit agricultural involvement, they are barriers that can be overcome through strategic efforts, relationships, and creativity. This section identifies possible strategies to better engage the agricultural community, as identified through the organizational and landowner interviews and questionnaires.

Improve Outreach to the Agricultural Community

Proactive and consistent communication is crucial to involving the agricultural community. It is likely that any plan will face resistance if the purposes, process and potential impacts of the plan are unclear to the agricultural community. As one organizational interviewee put it, "The energy that bumps this around is misunderstanding." Publications received by farmers are often anti conservation and endangered species. Some of the publications also build and stoke fears by giving extreme or exaggerated examples from the past. To reduce fears and misconceptions, landowners need to have their concerns addressed in words and actions. Clear and consistent communication early in the process regarding the purpose of the plan, why it is needed, and how it will work, will help avoid conflicts later in the process. The agricultural community has expressed in the past that they feel the plans are forced upon them. The local, state, and federal agencies should frequently reiterate that each plan is a collaborative process, explain the roles of landowners and organizations, and how their involvement helps shape the plan. As landowners and organizations come and go throughout the development of the plan, it is important to return to the initial information stage to both educate newcomers and to remind all involved of the larger picture and purposes of the plan.

The history of mistrust between landowners and government agencies, in particular between the agricultural community and regulatory agencies, may in part be overcome by proactive communication techniques. Planning partners who can employ new methods of communication will be more successful at reaching the agricultural community. To improve communication, plan participants can take advantage of the following methods and suggestions when engaging the agricultural community.

Build Partnerships with Existing Networks

Strategic partnerships should be used wherever and whenever possible when dealing with the agricultural community. As one interviewee put it, the wildlife agencies "will always have problems [with the agricultural community], but this can be partly overcome by developing relationships with the local government and maintaining a low key agency presence." Each county has its own system of networks and established relationships within the agricultural community. For example, many of the committee and board members of the local Resource Conservation District (RCD) and Agricultural Commission are also Farm Bureau members. These same individuals have often served together on other committees and have existing relationships with the local county and city planners.

Landowners are used to working with RCDs and the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS). Sixty-five percent of landowners participating in this study had received some help from the local Agricultural Extension office, half had worked with the NRCS and slightly less than half with the local RCD. Though governmental agencies, the NRCS and local RCDs do not play a regulatory role. These agencies are responsible for providing support and resources, giving them more favor with landowners, and typically have working relationships already established with landowners, providing a platform to work from. According to the organizational

interviewees, involving RCDs, the Agricultural Commissioner, and their boards can help to increase landowner participation. Outreach and partnership building efforts with these organizations can help to give plan participants access to landowners and to disperse information about conservation planning throughout the agricultural community. These organizations have the ability to reach landowners on the ground, to explain the workings of a plan and address their questions and concerns.

One method of building partnerships is to ask organizations such as the NRCS or RCDs to periodically review and comment on the plan or parts of the plan that relate to the agricultural community. Other key players to involve are the local Agricultural Extension and county Agricultural Commission. By involving these organizations in plan review, plan participants can enhance information dissemination to the agricultural community via the agricultural organizations who work directly with landowners. Then when plan components are circulated for public review, the agricultural community will already have seen and commented on the areas of their concern and will likely be more accepting of the plan because their input was sought and incorporated.

Through the interviews it became clear that many of the concerns of the agricultural community could be diffused through awareness of their concerns, increased communication, and education. A very effective but underutilized means of communication is direct contact with the agricultural community. Plan participants should focus on building relationships with the local agricultural groups, such as the Farm Bureau and grower associations. The local Farm Bureau, RCD, Agricultural Commission, and growers associations all have established monthly meetings. These meetings present the perfect opportunity for plan participants to directly reach a large portion of the agricultural community to talk about the plan and answer any questions that they have. Meeting them on their turf and at their time will help increase the potential for future dialog as well as show the planning partners' commitment to involving agriculture in the plan. Contacting growers associations and the local Farm Bureau will reach a large audience as the majority of landowners belong to one or both of these groups.

One organization that the plan participants should appeal to is the Agriculture Education Foundation.⁹ This foundation runs a two-year fellowship called the Agricultural Leadership Program. Thirty individuals with an agriculture background participate in the two-year fellowship and are trained in leadership and issues that have an impact on agriculture. Currently there are over 1,000 graduates of this program in the state. Involving these graduates in the conservation planning dialogue could be a significant resource for the plan participants because the graduates come from the agricultural community, are trained in economics and politics, and are also more aware of the purposes of environmental protection laws and pressures on regulatory agencies than is the typical lay person.

⁹ For more information visit the Agriculture Education Foundation website at www.agleaders.org

Employ Multiple Methods of Communication

Periodic newsletters, public meetings and in-person visits from plan representatives were ranked highest among the most effective methods of communicating to the agricultural community. Though nearly 2/3 of the landowners surveyed had access to the internet and email, web sites and email newsletters were the least preferred methods of communication. In addition, more than half of the respondents said that meetings in the evening were preferred over meetings held during the day.

Nearly 40 percent of landowners participating in this study said that they thought that a personal visit from plan representatives would be an effective means of communication. Where possible, meetings with landowners should occur outside of plan stakeholder meetings, to listen to concerns and talk with landowners about the benefits of participation. Though this takes effort and time, the result will be stronger relationships and a foundation from which to build a conservation plan that will have broader support.

When initiating communication, agencies should contact key individuals and begin building relationships with them first. Local Farm Bureau presidents and directors, RCD directors, and landowners that are either in the public eye or are in some way interested in conservation issues will more likely be open to meeting with plan representatives. These initial meetings can be a source of future contacts as these individuals are connected with the rest of the agricultural community.

If conservation plan representatives want agricultural landowners to participate, meetings should be scheduled during the evening rather than the daytime. Though this might inconvenience planning staff, it is unrealistic to ask farmers to forego their daily operations and activities to participate in a voluntary conservation planning effort. Several of the organizational representatives recalled midday regional agricultural meetings where the only agricultural representatives were organizations and not a single farmer was able to attend. Organizational representatives commented that their success at involving the agricultural community is partly because their meetings are held when farmers are available.

Focus on Public Relations

Some landowners in this study perceive that their livelihood could be threatened by the initiation of a plan and feel they are protecting themselves when they resist the plan. One of the key elements to communication on any level is to know your audience. William Ury, in *Getting Past No*, suggested that in order to create the right climate for problem solving, one must do the opposite of what the other side expects of you. He suggests that people with differing positions will expect each other to behave like adversaries. To promote a problem-solving climate, participants should be open and listen carefully to each other, acknowledge their points and their feelings, agree on common values, and always show each other respect.¹⁰ To accomplish this, plan representatives would benefit from training in conflict resolution, negotiation and collaboration. These skills will equip

¹⁰ Ury, William. *Getting Past No*. Bantam Books, New York, 1993.

participants to see the collaborative process through, avoid negotiation breakdown, and will help guide the process in a more effective way.

Organizational interview respondents said that plan representatives should be aware that language can have a profound effect on landowners. Legal and planning lingo should be avoided when addressing landowners. Though many landowners are aware of the plans, plan representatives should not expect them to know all of the terms and acronyms that staff uses as day-to-day language. In one instance, changing the title of the conservation plan to wording that was more appealing to agricultural interests "solved 30% of the problem."

Several of the non-profit organizations commented that plan representatives should be aware of the pressures that agriculture faces, and communicate with those pressures in mind. Landowners might be focused on their harvest, worried about wardens coming on to their land, worried about water quality regulation and runoff, or worried about endangered species regulation that might come about through the plan. Though some apprehensions may be unrealistic, many are based on experience. One example given in the interviews was an instance where a biologist left a gate open after making a site visit, which resulted in lost livestock. As one non-profit director stated, "Looking at their attitudes divorced from their concerns doesn't take into account the whole picture."

Provide Examples From Other Plans and Experiences

Giving examples of what conservation plans have meant to agriculture in other areas, especially how they impacted daily farm practices, would be helpful in sidestepping barriers that arise due to preconceived perceptions. Landowners are mainly concerned about what the plan will mean to their operation. Hearing a positive experience from a landowner in another region may help interest them in participating in a plan in their area. On an organizational level, inviting agricultural organizations that have collaborated in other plans to speak about the process, its benefits and its drawbacks also has the potential to inspire organizations in the current planning area to collaborate.

Having local landowners who have engaged in conservation activities talk with other landowners in the area about their experiences with habitat or wildlife protection, the Endangered Species Act, and conservation easements can help to increase the local agricultural community's engagement in conservation planning. Direct farmer-to-farmer communication provides information and insights to landowners who have not engaged in conservation efforts from someone they can relate to. Site visits and discussions about the habitat conservation planning process, potentially facilitated by a host landowner, could be a valuable resource for conservation planners.

Focus on Education

One landowner insightfully commented that "What people do not understand they do not want a part of." Therefore, explanation should be provided in early informational meetings on which data are needed, what they will be used for and how landowners might be affected. Basic information about what species are proposed to be covered, and why, should also be included in these meetings. Landowners might be willing to alter

their agricultural practices if they can see the link between their agricultural practices and harm to the species, or conversely how their practices could be modified to aid conservation. Specific topics that should also be explained are:

- Safe Harbor agreements
- Conservation easements
- Impacts of conservation areas on land values
- Possible effects from species and habitat conservation and management
- Good neighbor provisions
- Purposes of stakeholder and technical committees
- What makes a good mitigation site
- How landowners can get involved

Emphasize Commonalities

Landowners and organizations both indicated that they are very concerned about urban development and the loss of agriculture in their counties. According to Wondolleck and Yaffee, "Many successful initiatives have sought common ground by focusing on shared problems."¹¹ The most obvious common ground that the agricultural community shares with wildlife agencies and environmentalists is that urban growth and development can take agricultural land out of production and threaten wildlife and its habitat. Agencies want to see open space and habitat, and the landowners want to be able to stay in production. As the large majority of landowners commented in this study, agricultural productivity and habitat protection can be compatible activities. This should be a focal point for the plan participants when approaching the agricultural community.

Create Incentives to Participate

Landowners perceive there to be a lack of incentives for their involvement in conservation planning. One organizational interviewee gave the perspective that landowners come to the table for two reasons: 1) the plan participants are making decisions about their land, and 2) the plan is a potential mechanism for regulatory relief. The latter reason was only given by one of the interviewees, whereas the former was given by several interviewees as the main reason why landowners would participate. What appears to be missing for landowners and organizations is the appropriate balance of 'sticks and carrots'.

Currently, fear of Endangered Species Act (ESA) regulation has left some landowners feeling as if the most self-protective action they could take is to remove the species or habitat before it is found and regulation is imposed. One landowner commented that one of the reasons why people do "clean farming", which is the removal of all vegetation to the property line, is so that they will not have ESA "problems." If landowners were to remove threatened or endangered species or their habitat, the result would be a felony offense under the Endangered Species Act. Many landowners believe that ESA regulation will require them to change their practices and consequently incur some degree of cost, thus motivating them to do clean farming. Landowners would be more receptive to

¹¹ Wondolleck, J. and Yaffee, S. *Making Collaboration Work. Lessons From Innovation in Natural Resource Management.* Island Press, Washington, D.C. 2000.

participating in conservation plans if there were assurances that ongoing farm practices were protected. Since the California Fish and Game Code provides these assurances¹², communicating to the agricultural community that ongoing practices are protected should be a high priority.

In addition to these assurances, if the incentive structure was such that the presence of the habitat or a species would result in monetary compensation for the landowner, then it is likely that most landowners would be open to participation and would make efforts to protect or promote the species or habitat.

Financial viability and the ability to continue farming are most landowners' primary concerns. Combining conservation with the landowners' needs to be financially independent would likely show dramatic increases in support for the plans. Roughly 75% of landowners believe that they will have to change their practices in the future because of financial pressures, which suggests that they would respond positively to financial incentives. One landowner commented:

"The primary concerns of most farmers are taking care of the family, staying in business, keeping the farm in good shape, and so on. If habitat is going to break in to the top five, then there need to be economic incentives. Farmers can't even afford cost share programs. EQUIP¹³ costs money every time. If it can't be profitable to do habitat conservation (for example if EQUIP was 120% of the costs) no one will play. Everyone would play if it was."

Many of the interviewees communicated that conservation plans would be more acceptable if they contained provisions that look like something that is already familiar to landowners. For example, if the plans, as they affect landowners, resemble how the Williamson Act works, then it is likely that they would be better accepted. The example given was that if landowners received a tax break that could be renewed every 10-15 years, then they might be more willing to participate in the plan. In regards to easements, the option of either a one-time payment or annual payments should be available to appeal to landowners' preferences, though it was unclear from the interviews why this would make a significant difference.

Over half of the landowners interviewed thought that their business could benefit by being certified as wildlife friendly. If landowners participate in a conservation plan and take steps to develop habitat or protect species, then it is possible that some of the costs incurred could be passed on to consumers through higher market premiums as a result of

¹² California Fish and Game Code sections 2086-2089. Available from: <http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/cgi-bin/calawquery?codesection=fgc>

¹³ This landowner was referring to the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQUIP) reauthorized in the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (Farm Bill) and is administered by the Natural Resource Conservation Service. EQUIP is a cost share program that pays up to 75% of costs incurred through the implementation of conservation practices. For more information see: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/eqip/>.

a certification program similar to the organic certification program. A third party certification and promotion mechanism would add to the credibility of the program.

Celebrate Success

Communicating success stories is one way to motivate stakeholders to continue their involvement. Successes also remind those involved that the plan is progressing and that the process is working. Successes could be as small as recognizing mutual interests that were stated in a goals or mission statement, and as large as successfully negotiated agreements between typically adversarial parties. As mentioned earlier, landowners from other areas could be brought in to describe the impacts and benefits of a conservation plan on their operations. Bringing in local farmers to talk about their positive experiences with conservation easements, habitat conservation, and endangered species could also be helpful in communicating successes.

Small successes should be pursued first. The creation of milestones can be used to track the progress of the plan, and the completion of milestones will remind stakeholders that their involvement is important and productive. Stakeholders who feel they are wasting their time become less motivated and may ultimately disengage from the process making the final goal more difficult to reach. Celebrating success with press releases, public commendations, and social gatherings publicly acknowledges the group's hard work, sacrifices, and accomplishments.

Further Study

Several unresolved issues that came up many times during the course of this study could not be adequately addressed due to the limited scope and time frame of this project. These issues are presented here in order to acknowledge that they are important to the agricultural community, and are therefore valuable topics for conservation planners to address.

In this study, 83% of landowners said that urban growth and development was the number one land use planning issue facing agriculture in their area, and 92% said they were concerned about the loss of agriculturally productive land in their county. Agricultural organizations and landowner associations have communicated in the past their resistance to conservation easements because the reduced tax base affects the local community. In a 1999 "Ag Alert" from the California Farm Bureau Federation, President Bill Pauli said, "Our experience in California...is that they [HCPs] are tools for encouraging urban sprawl, and magnify the loss of good farmland by forcing productive land into public habitat preserves."¹⁴

However, several interviewed landowners made it clear that as soon as their land is more profitable to sell to a developer than it is to farm, they will sell the land. Agency staff have communicated their frustration about what appear to be conflicting motives from the agricultural community regarding the selling of farmland for urban type development and keeping farmland in production. Several of the organizations interviewed acknowledged

¹⁴ For the complete article see the Ag Alert archives on the web at <http://www.cfbf.com/agalert/1996-00/1999/aa-1027a.htm> (Accessed September 2003).

that though some agricultural organizations say that they are concerned about the loss of productive land, farmland is ultimately what is being sold to development. One interviewee commented, "Every landowner in the western half of the county has been approached by developers. Why would landowners get involved in permanent conservation if it precludes possible sales?" The following topics should be studied in order to address these and other perceptions of the agricultural community.

Economic Impacts of a Conservation Plan

As mentioned above, one major concern that is continually reiterated is the effect of conservation plans, habitat restoration, conservation areas and conservation easements on the economics of a community or region. Better knowledge of the economic impacts of regional conservation plans on local communities would clear up the confusion surrounding this perception.

Conservation Plans and the Rate of Development

Another claim from the agricultural community is that regional conservation plans encourage urban development. Before- and after- comparisons of urban development rates and conversion of farmland to urban land uses should be studied in order to address this perception.

Conservation Plans and Property Values

Apprehension toward conservation plans due to potential property value increases and/or decreases arose during this study. There is a lot of confusion regarding whether or not values will increase or decrease, and the implications of those changes. Looking at the effect of a regional conservation plan on land values will provide agencies with the means of addressing this question.

Conclusion

Overcoming the barriers of agricultural involvement in conservation planning will be a formidable challenge for plan participants in the years and decades to come. However, once the bridges have been built, it is likely that wildlife advocates will find their strongest allies within the agricultural community. Conservation planners and the agricultural community have a lot to gain by partnering with one another. Awareness of the perspectives and concerns of the agricultural community is the first step to building a lasting partnership. The observations, methods, and suggestions presented here can help to initiate and foster relationships in which mutual goals, understanding and cooperation drive the process.

Appendix

Appendix 1. Landowner Mail Survey Sample

Hello,

My name is Bryan Henson and I am a Graduate fellow with the Sustainable Communities Leadership Program, a non profit organization whose purpose is to promote sustainable communities through leadership development. The focus of my work is assessing agricultural landowner's perspectives regarding regional conservation planning, and ways that agencies and local governments can better involve agricultural community members in planning efforts.

Motivation

Regional conservation plans in California were born out of the predominantly urbanized south. As these plans have moved north and east into the agricultural dominated central valley, wildlife agencies have faced a whole new set of challenges in soliciting support for the plans. Recognizing this, the California Department of Fish & Game (CDFG) has asked for an evaluation of their conservation programs as they relate to the agricultural community.

The Survey

At this point I want to reiterate that I am not an employee of CDFG. Since I do not work for CDFG, I feel that I will be able to give them an honest assessment of landowner perspectives, based on your comments, as well as provide CDFG with recommendations based on those comments. I believe that this questionnaire is a prime opportunity for you to voice your concerns to CDFG about conservation planning.

I would greatly appreciate a small amount of your time to hear your views on this issue. The following questionnaire should take approximately 20 minutes to complete. There are no correct or incorrect responses, so please feel free to express your opinions.

Confidentiality

All information that I obtain from landowners will be voluntary and **absolutely confidential**. In no way will anyone's name, address or phone number be traceable to their comments.

The information you provide is very valuable! Your perspectives will be useful in providing guidance on landowner perspectives about conservation planning to wildlife agencies and local governments for current and future regional conservation plans.

Please complete the enclosed survey and mail it in the addressed, stamped envelope by **September 8**.

Agricultural Landowner Questionnaire

Background Information

1. How would you describe your primary activity? *Please circle the most appropriate answer.*
 - a. Ranching
 - b. Row crops
 - c. Orchards
 - d. Rice
 - e. Vineyards
 - f. Dairy
 - g. Other_____
2. Does this activity account for your primary source of income? *Please check.*
____Yes ____No
3. Can you tell me the names of any agricultural associations or organizations that you are a member or active participant of? *Circle None or fill in the names.*
 - a. None
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
 - d. _____
 - e. _____
 - f. _____
4. Thinking of your farming operation and those of the other farmers in your area, what do you think are the major land use planning issues facing agriculture in your area?
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
5. Have you ever participated in any programs with the local (*Please Check*):
 6. Resource Conservation District? ____Yes ____No
 7. Agricultural Extension? ____Yes ____No
 8. Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS)? ____Yes ____No

9. A non-profit land trust? _____Yes _____No

10. If YES to any of the above, what was the program? (**Please Circle**)

- a. Soil/Water conservation
- b. Wildlife related
- c. Conservation Easement
- d. Other_____

11. Have you ever participated in wildlife habitat restoration on your land?
_____Yes _____No

12. If YES, what activities?

For the following questions please circle the most appropriate answer.

13. How important is it to you that natural landscapes and wildlife in California are protected?

Very important Somewhat important Not Important

14. How important is having wildlife habitat near your community in regards to your quality of life?

Very important Somewhat important Not Important

15. How important is it you that there is a balance between species protection and human activities?

Very important Somewhat important Not Important

16. Do you believe that protection of endangered species should be limited to public lands?

_____Yes _____No

17. Who do you think should be responsible for the costs of protecting wildlife in California?

- a. Developers _____
- b. Environmental groups _____
- c. All California Residents _____
- d. Local governments where the wildlife live _____
- e. State agencies _____
- f. Federal Agencies _____
- g. Other_____

18. Most rare wildlife species are endangered because of habitat loss. In General, do you believe that the state should help protect these species?

_____Yes _____No

Perspectives on Conservation Planning

19. Have you heard of the following types of conservation programs? (*Check for Yes*)

_____Natural Community Conservation Plan (NCCP) _____Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP)
_____Safe Harbor

If you did not check any of them, please skip to question 23.

20. How well do you feel you understand the conservation planning process? (*Please circle the most appropriate answer.*)

Very well Well Not very well Not at all

21. What do you think the purposes of an NCCP/HCP are?

22. Where did you hear about NCCPs or HCPs? (*Please check all that apply.*)

_____Farm Bureau _____TV/Newspaper/Magazine
_____Neighbor/Friend _____Internet
_____Other (please list) _____

23. What do you know about the concept of Safe Harbor?

24. What do you think are the main reasons that would keep an agricultural landowner from participating in a regional conservation plan?

Please circle whether or not you Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, or Strongly Disagree with each statement based upon your perspectives.

25. Conservation plans will encourage urban development on agricultural lands.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

26. I am concerned about the loss of agriculturally productive land in my county.

- | | | | | |
|--|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|
| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|--|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|
27. Agricultural interests that get involved in regional conservation planning will have the ability to influence the future of their community.
- | | | | | |
|--|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|
| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|--|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|
28. Agricultural productivity and habitat conservation can be compatible activities.
- | | | | | |
|--|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|
| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|--|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|
29. Regional conservation plans are an appropriate method for protecting farmland from urban encroachment.
- | | | | | |
|--|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|
| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|--|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|
30. Regional conservation plans are an effective means of protecting endangered wildlife on private land.
- | | | | | |
|--|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|
| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|--|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|
31. There are very few incentives for me participate with agencies in their conservation planning efforts.
- | | | | | |
|--|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|
| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|--|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|
32. A conservation plan should equally balance farmland protection, economic opportunities and wildlife protection.
- | | | | | |
|--|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|
| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|--|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|

Perspectives on Private Property Rights

Please state whether or not you Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, or Strongly Disagree with each statement based upon your perspectives.

33. Voluntary involvement in conservation plans with government agencies should protect landowners from additional regulatory measures as they relate to the species or habitat covered by the plan.
- | | | | |
|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|
| Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|
34. I expect to be able to continue my current farming practices indefinitely.
- | | | | |
|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|
| Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|
35. I need the freedom to change my farming practices anytime that I want to for any reason.
- | | | | |
|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|
| Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|
36. I do not want to change my practices but fear I might have to for financial reasons
- | | | | |
|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|
| Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|
37. I wouldn't mind changing my practices for a cause that would benefit wildlife.
- | | | | |
|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|
| Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|
38. A conservation plan should offer options to landowners that protect their investment and future economic gains.
- | | | | |
|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|
| Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|
39. Do you think that involvement in a regional conservation plan would increase or reduce the value of your land? _____Increase _____Reduce _____Don't know

Perspectives on Solutions

This next section is a brief list of things that government agencies at all levels could do to increase support among agricultural landowners for regional conservation plans. Please indicate whether or not you Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, or Strongly Disagree with each statement based upon your perspectives.

40. Assurance of confidentiality of the biological information on your land.
- | | | | |
|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|
| Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|

41. A proactive, concerted effort to listen to the needs of and address concerns of agricultural landowners.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

42. Presence of agricultural representatives on technical advisory groups.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

43. Actively seek participation with the Natural Resource Conservation Service.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

44. Actively seek participation with the local Resource Conservation District.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

45. I would like to give my perspectives to those developing the plans but do not have the time to go to regular meetings.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

46. I would be interested in a program that offered incentives to enhance wildlife habitat on my land that also allowed me to remove that habitat in the future with no consequences.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

47. Could your business benefit from being certified as wildlife friendly?

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

48. From the following list, what methods of getting information to you about regional conservation plans would be effective? (***Check all that apply***)

- a. Periodic newsletter mailings _____
- b. Periodic newsletter emails _____
- c. Public informational meetings _____
- d. Frequently updated website _____
- e. Meetings held in the evenings rather than daytime _____
- f. Meetings held during the weekend rather than midweek _____
- g. Personal contact from agency staff _____
- h. Personal contact from a representative group _____
- i. Other _____

49. Are there any other methods, techniques or ideas that would encourage agricultural landowner participation in conservation plans?

Just a few more questions!

50. Do you have access to the Internet ____Yes ____No or Email ____Yes ____No
(Don't worry, we aren't going to ask for your email address!)?

51. Are you aware of any regional conservation plans currently happening in your county?
____Yes ____No

52. What organization could best represent your interests in a regional conservation plan?

53. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about regional conservation planning as it relates to you, or any general comments that you would like to make?

54. Do you know of anyone else who should participate in this survey? If so, can you tell me their name, phone and address?

Thank you for your input and help!

Please return this questionnaire in the enclosed envelope.

Appendix 2. Landowner Interview Results

Table 1. Represented Farming Activities

Landowner Activity	Number of Responses
Ranching	8
Row crops	8
Orchards	3
Rice	3
Vineyards	4
Nursery	4

Table 2. Represented Associations and Organizations by Category

Category	Number of Responses	Percent
Growers Association	22	85%
Farm Bureau	19	73%
County Agricultural Commission	5	19%
Farmers Market Assn	4	15%
Water Association	2	8%
Environmental Organizations	2	8%
Advisory Committee*	1	4%

*Agricultural education advisory committee member

Table 3. Land Use Planning Issues Facing Agriculture

Land Use Planning Categories	Number of Responses	Percent
Population Growth and Development	20	83
Water Rights/Regulation	7	29
Endangered Species Regulation	4	17
General Regulation	4	17
Land Values/Affordable Housing	2	8
Chemical/Fertilizer Regulation	1	4
Removal of Land from Production	1	4

Table 4. Landowner Involvement in Local Resource Programs

Local Organization	Participated	Percent Participated
Resource Conservation District	11	42%
Agricultural Extension	17	65%
Natural Resource Conservation Service	13	50%
Non-profit Land Trust	2	8%

Table 5. Importance of Wildlife, Habitat and Species Protection

Question	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important	Number of Respondents
How important is it to you that natural landscapes and wildlife in California are protected?	18 (72%)	6 (24%)	1 (4%)	25
How important is having wildlife habitat near your community in regards to your quality of life?	17 (68%)	7 (28%)	1 (4%)	25
How important is it to you that there is a balance between species protection and human activities?	14 (58%)	8 (33%)	2 (8%)	24

Table 6. Limiting Species Protection to Public Land

Question	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Don't Know (%)	Number of Responses
Do you believe that protection of endangered species should be limited to public lands?	57%)	13 (39%)	1 (4%)	23

Table 7. Parties Responsible for Protecting Wildlife

Responsible Party	Number of Responses	Percent
All California Residents	17	71
Developers	11	46
State Agencies	11	46
Federal Agencies	9	38
Environmental Groups	8	33
Local Governments	8	33

Table 8. Expressed Barriers to Regional Conservation Planning Participation

Response	Number of Responses	Percent Agree
Government Mistrust	10	42
Too Costly	8	33
Restricted Land Use	5	21
Time	4	17
Too Much Effort	4	17
Decreased Land Value	1	4

Table 9. Landowner Perspectives on Conservation Planning

Question	Agree	Disagree	Number of Responses
Conservation plans will encourage urban development on agricultural lands.	7 (29%)	17 (71%)	24
I am concerned about the loss of agriculturally productive land in my county.	24 (92%)	2 (8%)	26
Agricultural interests that get involved in regional conservation planning will have the ability to influence the future of their community.	19 (76%)	6 (24%)	25
Agricultural productivity and habitat conservation can be compatible activities.	24 (92%)	2 (8%)	26
Regional conservation plans are an appropriate method for protecting farmland from urban encroachment.	20 (87%)	3 (13%)	23
Regional conservation plans are an effective means of protecting endangered wildlife on private land.	14 (74%)	5 (26%)	19
There are very few incentives for me to participate with agencies in their conservation planning efforts.	21 (81%)	5 (19%)	26
A conservation plan should equally balance farmland protection, economic opportunities and wildlife protection.	23 (88%)	3 (12%)	26

Table 10. Landowner Perspectives on Private Property Rights

Question	Agree	Disagree	Number of Responses
Voluntary involvement in conservation plans with government agencies should protect landowners from additional regulatory measures as they relate to the species or habitat covered by the plan.	21 (88%)	3 (13%)	24
I expect to be able to continue my current farming practices indefinitely.	17 (68%)	8 (32%)	25
I need the freedom to change my farming practices anytime that I want to for any reason.	19 (83%)	4 (17%)	23
I do not want to change my practices but fear I might have to for financial reasons.	17 (77%)	5 (23%)	22
I wouldn't mind changing my practices for a cause that would benefit wildlife.	13 (59%)	9 (41%)	22
A conservation plan should offer options to landowners that protect their investment and future economic gains.	24 (100%)	0 (0%)	24

Table 11. Perception of the Effect of Conservation Plans on Property Values

Question	Increase	Decrease	Don't know	Number of Responses
Do you think that involvement in a regional conservation plan would increase or reduce the value of your land?	6 (23%)	14 (54%)	6 (23%)	26

Table 12. Landowner Perspectives on Potential Incentives to Increase Participation

Incentive	Agree	Disagree	Number of Responses
Assurance of confidentiality of the biological information on property.	20 (80%)	5 (20%)	25
Presence of agricultural representatives on technical advisory groups.	25 (96%)	1 (4%)	26
Actively seek participation with the Natural Resource Conservation Service.	20 (83%)	4 (17%)	24
Actively seek participation with the local Resource Conservation District.	20 (87%)	3 (13%)	23
I would be interested in a program that offered incentives to enhance wildlife habitat on my land that also allowed me to remove that habitat in the future with no consequences.	18 (72%)	7 (28%)	25
Could your business benefit from being certified as wildlife friendly?	13 (52%)	12 (48%)	25
A proactive, concerted effort to listen to the needs of and address concerns of agricultural landowners.	24 (92%)	2 (8%)	26
I would like to give my perspectives to those developing the plans but do not have the time to go to regular meetings.	20 (83%)	4 (17%)	24

Table 13. Landowner Preferences of Receiving Information about Conservation Planning

Response	Number of Responses	Percent
Periodic newsletter mailings	17	65
Meetings held in the evenings rather than daytime	14	54
Public informational meetings	12	46
Personal contact from agency staff	10	38
Personal contact from a representative group*	7	27
Frequently updated website	5	19
Meetings held during the weekend rather than midweek	4	15
Periodic newsletter emails	3	12

* See Table 2 for a list of the groups

Table 14. Ideas that would Encourage Landowner Participation in Conservation Plans

Response	Number of Responses	Percent
Monetary Compensation	6	43%
Education on Conservation	5	36%
Reduce Regulation	3	21%
More Agriculture Involvement in Plan Development*	1	7%

*This was a general comment given by a landowner and was not specific as to what more involvement meant.

Table 15. Landowner Access to the Internet and Email

Question	Yes	No	Number of Responses
Do you have internet access?	16 (67%)	8 (33%)	24
Do you have access to email?	15 (65%)	8 (35%)	23

Table 16. Landowner Awareness of Regional Conservation Plans in their Area

Response	Number of Responses	Percent
Aware	13	54
Not Aware	11	46

Table 17. Organizations That Could Best Represent Landowners' Interests in a Regional Conservation Plan

Category	Number of Responses	Percent
Farm Bureau	6	29
Local RCD	4	19
Local County	4	19
Grower Associations	3	14
Agricultural Commission	3	14
Environmental Organization/Land Trust	2	10
Water District/Association	2	10
NRCS	1	5

Appendix 3. Land Use Planning Concerns Responses

	Landowner Comments
1	Not allowing enough land for affordable housing. Attempts from Cal F&G and NMFS to discover more listings for endangered species list.
2	Urban development. Water conservation. More houses = more water use = cuts in irrigation.
3	Urban development and loss of grazing areas.
4	Urbanization. Water runoff. Dust contaminants. Availability of water at reasonable rates.
5	Absurd government controls and restrictions.
6	Encroachment of development.
7	Development, overregulation on agriculture, property rights.
8	Farmers and ranchers scratch out a living until they become too old to continue. They cannot sell it as ag land because no one else can farm it and make the loan payments. Developers can buy it, but we hate to see that.
9	Growth - newcomers tell us how and what to farm - then going to court to stop 75 years of farming. We were here first and had lots of wildlife!
10	Water and encroaching subdivisions
11	High cost of operation and too many restrictions. Makes it difficult to survive and selling land becomes an option.
12	Zoning and Runoff.
13	Development, governmental regulations, environmental and endangered species issues.
14	Water runoff.
15	To be able to farm and be left alone. All the farms other than mine are now sold and being developed.
16	Wildlife preservation. Open space preservation. Urban sprawl.
17	Population growth ruining farmland and habitat.
18	Clean water could have been handled better a long time ago. Now it's a crisis "Us against Them" situation. Water competition with city when there is a drought. Development. If it is flat it is going to be gone.
19	Development. There is no future for agriculture. Roads. It isn't that development is bad, but there is no balance.
20	Urban development. Water conservation. More houses = more water use = cuts in irrigation.
21	Water shortage because of development. Taxation.
22	Land acquisition and taking agricultural land out of production. In lieu taxes are not paid. Loose employment which multiplies throughout the community. Biological surveys result in more listings. Crop predation from habitat development (e.g. buffers).
23	Chemicals and regulations. Regulations on fertilizers.
24	Development and real estate values.
	Growth and development.

Appendix 4. Expressed Barriers to Regional Conservation Planning Participation

	Response
1	Cost to the landowner, lack of time and paperwork.
2	It would create a lien on the land and lower its value. This is negative when land is appraised and when it is used as collateral on a loan.
3	Ultimate goal of conservation plan is to eventually make farming unprofitable so the land is sold in entirety to and for public habitat use.
4	Federal and state government over regulated and made landowners reject the conservation effort. The landowners do not trust the federal and state officials.
5	Restricted land use based on fed and state regulations doesn't allow landowners to focus his land as he wants to use it.
6	Government interference and restrictions. Too much paperwork.
7	Fear of the unknown; what impact the plan would have on use of their land. Landowners hear conflicting information and don't get straight answers from various organizations and agencies. Agencies and specialists use terms that are not familiar to landowners.
8	Money!
9	Landowners are taxed and regulated to death. Outside of U.S. growers do not have to follow same rules. So our net money down cause of competition and neighbors. No respect.
10	Time and expense
11	Cost
12	The few agriculture lands that can produce agricultural products are valued on the crops they can produce. Higher value crops equals higher value farms. Conservation in a true "Free Economy" comes when someone wishes to take land out of development that has a lesser agricultural value.
13	Its like sleeping with the devil.
14	Money
15	Money and space
16	Cost, time and effort. It is easier to keep the whole place clean (e.g. giving instructions to workers and training workers).
17	Limits ability to farm. Its inconvenient and expensive. Many hours, long process and time is money. Farmers are good shepherds but it all falls on them and costs them money. Can't expect them to do it for fun. Why can developers move vernal pools and plow over 1000's of acres but a farmer is limited to what they can do? The threat of additional regs prohibits ag involvement.
18	What farmers don't like: There is a perception that environmental groups have taken over an arm of the government doing work for them = frightening. Many fears of the future and the unknown. New people running things. What happens if government buys a conservation easement? In the future the sierra club can come and want access to it. What people don't understand they don't want a part of.
19	Interference with ability to make a living.
20	Fear of county control of deed of trust (in the case of an easement). If there were no strings attached it would be easier. No generational entrapment. Administration and policy change. Many farmers have been screwed before and no one trusts the government.
21	Takes away private property rights and control away from the local government. Risk of losses like taxable revenue and crop predation. Increases potential for more ESA. In perpetuity is difficult. No one wants to hamstring their heirs.
22	Its not an income issue, but more of what you can and cannot do with you land, and your future livelihood.
23	Relinquishing jurisdiction of land and limiting ability to define my own course.
24	More work for them (landowners). Most people want less government. No one wants interference and regulations. There are lots of horror stories.

Appendix 5. Methods, Techniques or Ideas that would Encourage Agricultural Landowner Participation in Conservation Plans

	Response
1	Have a provision to increase the value assigned to the land when it is place in a conservation plan.
2	Keep property rights a priority above habitat rights. When property rights are superceded, land value for farming practices is greatly reduced and eventually lost completely.
3	Cut way down on regulation imposed on landowners.
4	Reduce state and federal government regulations and restrictions.
5	Need to have agricultural interests involved in plan development. When agreements are made, insure that the agreements are kept.
6	Pay them. For example the rice subsidy. The williamson act is too cumbersome.
7	Tax breaks.
8	Alot of farmers don't care and don't want to care. The primary concerns of most farmers is taking care of the family, staying in business, keeping farm in good shape etc. If habitat is going to break in to the top 5 then there need to be economic incentives. Farmers can't even afford cost share programs. EQUIP costs money every time. If it can't be profitable to do habitat conservation (eg equip = 120% of the costs) no one will play. Everyone would play if it was.
9	Should publicize legal help. For example a land use attorney, not from county, but paid by county to talk about taxes and give info on how to get through easements and streamline the legal help. Nothing happens without getting the farmers' children involved. A farmer will not participate in an easement because of children's future but would be interested in a county plan for the area. Dividing land for next generation results in more roads and wells which is not what anyone wants to do. We are forced to subdivide. Have to loosen up rules for subdividing so thta houses could be clustered. 20 acre zoning has to be divided to 4 parcels instead of clustering.
10	There is no quick fix. Get to know ag so that you know what they are doing. Education on private property rights and conservation and how they intersect. The definition of endangered species needs looking into. For example, the spotted owl is not really endangered and it screwed people up in the process. "Found spotted owl but can't tell you where they are." Why should farmers believe this? Impression is that the agency is doing this to just screw things up and get in the way. Educate the farmers. What is important, why its important, why it got that way and what they want to do about it.
11	Changing public image of agency being controlling, which is the biggest turnoff to cooperation. Agency should come in as a support or help. Farmers like to be left alone. It will take a while for new generations to build trust. Have to communicate whyfarmers need Fish and Game's help. When you present it needs to be simplified and streamlined. 1pg version of the 200 pg background.
12	Pay for benefits through voluntary contracts for terms of years with an option to opt in or out. Provide mitigation credit for environmental benefits ag already provides.
13	It would be great to meet with the agricultural commissioner, farmers and agency people and bring them out to see the pressures and share what the problems are. Talk out the various alternatives.
14	Education to know what to do to help and how. But most farmers could care less.

Appendix 6. General Landowner Comments

	Comments
1	We provide shelter for several varieties of wildlife. The deer can be a real problem at times. We should be allowed to eat a problem deer once in a while...not just kill it and give it away. This could compensate for some damage.
2	We have seen through info gathered at the county farm bureau how farmers have lost out entirely once habitat conservation plans were implemented!
3	The protection of endangered species should be limited to current habitat areas - not mitigate to create new areas for endangered species. Keep state and federal agencies out. Leave it to local areas.
4	Keep the government off my back!
5	We are a small farm so we don't qualify for many programs. Any regional conservation plan needs to include the participation of small acreage landowners as well as large.
6	Need to teach kids, then parents, how important that your food comes from local growers and how that helps their neighborhood! I have watched for 30 years and do not understand the conservation planning process. I can't hire people to do my land work because of government regulations and workman's compensation costs.
7	Some wildlife destroy important crops.
8	As soon as my agricultural land is worth more to a developer than I can make off the products that I grow, I want to sell it. Setting aside agricultural land that is not productive from development that promises jobs and investing can negatively influence our community. I think the Endangered Species Act like all other "do gooder" laws have been taken to the extreme and do not really serve the communities' best interest in that they restrict the development of lands to a very narrow group of ideals.
9	Right now people are operating with a lot of ignorance. The Purpose of farming is to make money. Fish and Game needs to understand this. Farms are better than houses, so make it better for farmers. In 1961 more vineyards in Placer than other counties in the area. All of them went to houses because of I-80.
10	Willing to protect but don't want land locked up so I can't sell it. Hear stories of rare bread of mouse shutting a farmer down. That is overboard.
11	Process of wildlife/habitat destruction has gone on for so long it is probably gone too far. Used to see deer and elk around in the 50's but not anymore.